

Dallas Opened '64 Drive; 'It Was Going Beautifully'

The Washington Post today begins publication of excerpts from Lyndon B. Johnson's account of his Presidency. His book, "The Vantage Point," will be published shortly by Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc. The excerpting was done for The Post by Chalmers M. Roberts.

PREFACE

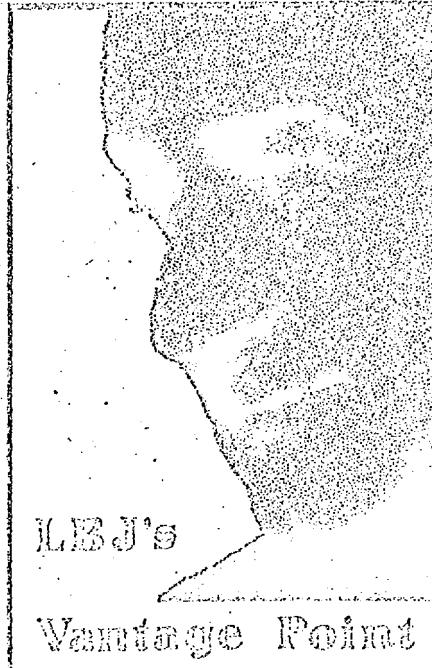
It has been said that the Presidency is the loneliest office in the world. I did not find it so. Even during the darkest hours of my administration, I always knew that I could draw on the strength, support, and love of my family and my friends.

But if I was seldom lonely, I was often alone. No one can experience with the President of the United States the glory and agony of his office. No one can share the majestic view from his pinnacle of power. No one can share the burden of his decisions or the scope of his duties. A Cabinet officer, no matter how broad his mandate, has a limited responsibility. A Senator, no matter how varied his interests, has a limited constituency. But the President represents all the people and must face up to all the problems. He must be responsible, as he sees it, for the welfare of every citizen and must be sensitive to the will of every group. He cannot pick and choose his issues. They all come with the job. So his experience is unique among his fellow Americans.

For better or worse, then, this is a book that only a President could have written. That is the sole excuse for its existence. I make no pretense of having written a complete and definitive history of my Presidency. I have tried, rather, to review that period from a President's point of view—reflecting a President's personal and political philosophy, a President's experience and knowledge, a President's aspirations, and a President's response to the demands that were made on him.

I have not written these chapters to say, "This is how it was," but to say, "This is how I saw it from my vantage point." Neither have I attempted to cover all the events of my administration. I have selected what I consider to be the most important problems, the most pressing goals, and the most historic accomplishments of my years as President.

Finally, I have tried to avoid engaging in historical paraphrase. I did not set out to write a propaganda piece in support of my decisions. My purpose has been to state the problems



that I faced as President, to record the facts as they came to me, to list the alternatives available, and to review what I did and why I did it. Others will have to judge the results on their merits. The struggle in Vietnam, for example, inspired one of the most passionate and deeply felt debates in our nation's life. That debate will go on, no matter what is written in these pages. History will make its judgments on the decisions made and the actions taken.

Sincerely, Lyndon B. Johnson

Johnson City, Tex.

April 1971.

"The Beginning"

"We're going to carry two states next year if we don't carry any others: Massachusetts and Texas."

The speaker was John F. Kennedy.

The time was Friday morning, November 22, 1963.

I had gone to the President's eighth-floor suite in the Hotel Texas in Fort Worth to introduce my younger sister, Lucia Alexander, to him. The President's spirits were high. He had come to Texas for politics, and the trip so far was successful—much more successful than I had expected. He had been warmly received everywhere he went. The crowds in San Antonio and Houston on the previous day had been large and enthusiastic.

That morning in Fort Worth he had already made two speeches, one to a large gathering in a parking lot across the street from the hotel and another

to a Chamber of Commerce breakfast in the hotel. Money and power were represented at the breakfast, but the parking lot audience—made up of workers, mothers, and children—gave me more assurance about the mood of Texas. Many of them had waited in a steady drizzle for more than an hour to hear him and to see Mrs. Kennedy.

"Where's Jackie?" someone in the crowd shouted.

"Mrs. Kennedy is organizing herself," the President said. "It takes longer, but of course she looks better than we do when she does it." The crowd loved this, and roared its approval.

Now it was time to leave for Dallas. John Kennedy was thinking about the future, about the approaching presidential campaign and the necessity for carrying Texas. No one, including the President, considered his reelection to be a cinch. In fact, the President's ratings in the polls were as low as they had ever been. But his reception thus far in Texas seemed to disprove the polls, and this fact was very much on President Kennedy's mind. The polls may have given him cause for gloom, but the people certainly did not.

That was obviously what he was thinking about when he remarked to me, cheerfully, that we would at least carry Massachusetts and Texas. They were the last words John Kennedy ever spoke to me.

When John Kennedy first offered me the Vice Presidential nomination, I asked him to be candid with me. If it was only a courteous gesture, I said, I wanted him to say so. He replied that he needed me to run with him if the ticket was to be successful.

I served John Kennedy for three years—as a candidate and as his Vice President. I served him loyally, as I would have wanted my Vice President to serve me. We did not always see things in the same light. I did not always agree with everything that happened in his administration. But when I did disagree with the President, I did so in private, and man to man.

What some people did not understand was that our relationship, which dated back to our service together in the House of Representatives, had always been one of mutual respect, admiration, and cooperation. When I was running for Senate Minority Leader in 1953, John Kennedy called me from Massachusetts and said: "I want you to know you can count on my support." It was purely a self-initiated act on his part. I hadn't even contacted him.